



# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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### SHORTAGE OF RABBIT PELTS HITS HATTERS; OPM TRIES TO SAVE JOBS

Unless the supply of domestic pelts can be increased substantially, the American hat industry faces a tight supply situation because of a 20 to 25 per-cent reduction in rabbit skin imports, according to a joint statement released today by officials of the Office of Production Management and the Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Department of the Interior.

Plans are now being made to encourage raisers of domestic rabbits, particularly white rabbits, and trappers of wild rabbits in western States to increase the supply of pelts.

"Rabbit fur is essential in the hat industry," explained J. H. Bleistein, New York fur dealer and OPM consultant on fur problems. "A large portion of the imported skins came from countries now dominated by the Axis-powers."

Besides the curtailment of imports, inroads into the hatters' supply have been made by the fur trade, which uses rabbit skins to make fur coats and to "trim" cloth coats.

Full impact of the War was not reflected in imports until the third quarter of 1940, Mr. Bleistein said.



OPM officials are urging rabbit breeders and trappers to increase the domestic supply of rabbit pelts. J. Franklin Ray, Jr., deputy supervisor of Civilian Allocation in OPM's Division of Civilian Supply, pointed out that prices for pelts are increasing.

"We are making every effort to encourage trappers and dealers to save the pelts for the hat and fur markets," he said. "This is one of the many instances in which OPM is attempting to bring civilian demand in line with supply by increasing the supply, rather than by controlling the demand."

Fish and Wildlife Service officials greeted the plan as a "two-in-one" benefit. "If trappers in the West will increase their take of jack rabbits, not only will the trappers and hatters benefit, but farmers will welcome the idea," said Frank G. Ashbrook, in charge of the Service's fur work.

Jack rabbits take a heavy toll on western farm and grazing areas, where the animals compete with livestock for range lands or destroy many acres of farm crops. So heavy is the damage by jack rabbits that the Service maintains a staff of experts to assist in control of depredations.

The rabbits eat grass needed as food supply by cattle and sheep. When the range has been depleted, the rabbits move into farm lands. In Las Cruces, N. Mex., recently, a 10-acre area cultivated to beans was picked clean by wild rabbits in less than a week.

Scientific methods of raising domestic rabbits or trapping wild ones are explained in bulletins issued by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Dorr D. Green, chief of the Service's Division of Predatory and Rodent Control, said that most of the wild jack rabbits are found in Idaho, Oregon, Utah, Colorado, Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, New Mexico, and Arizona. Some are found in Texas.



While trappers can increase their income by taking more wild rabbits and saving the pelts than in former years, Mr. Bleistein pointed out that an increase in the tame rabbit supply is also necessary if both hatters and furriers are to be supplied. "In no event could increased supplies of wild rabbits do more than relieve a small fraction of the appreciable shortage in the total supply of rabbits," he said.

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